

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,

STATES RELATIONS SERVICE.

A. C. TRUE, Director.

AGRICULTURAL EXHIBITS AND CONTESTS.SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING THE SUBJECT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.¹

Value of the school exhibit.—For a number of years school fairs have been held and appreciated for their educational value in certain progressive school districts. The development of the home-project plan has aroused a new interest in the exhibition of the products of the practical work done both at home and school. The chief value of such exhibits may be grouped as follows: (1) They arouse interest on the part of the student in practicums and projects and through them a general interest in school; (2) they establish ideals toward which the students may work; (3) in their preparation and arrangement they give practice to the student and furnish material for practice in judging; (4) as they furnish opportunity for cooperation they have a beneficial socializing influence associated with school spirit; and (5) they furnish teacher and students an opportunity to show patrons and parents what is being done. Although school exhibits have great advertising value the teacher should not lose sight of the educational aim, i. e., to use them chiefly for the benefit of students and the young people of the community who should be in school.

Type of school exhibits.—Although at this time we are considering only agricultural exhibits we do not wish to lose sight of the value of general school fairs. The agricultural exhibits may be made a part of a general school fair; in most cases, however, the exhibition of the agricultural work of the students should merit a special agricultural fair. The term agricultural exhibit is applied to material gathered together for teaching purposes in the school museum. Although we appreciate the value of such permanent exhibits, at this time we are considering a temporary exhibition of the work of the students in agriculture at home and in the school. This exhibit may be general, covering all phases of agriculture, or it may deal with one line of class work or one project, such as a poultry, pig, or colt show, a corn or a potato exhibit. If the home projects follow one or two special lines it may be better to hold special exhibits of home

¹ Prepared by H. P. Barrows, Specialist in Agricultural Education, under the direction of C. H. Lane, Chief Specialist in Agricultural Education.

work rather than attempt general ones, as it is a better policy to undertake a little and do it well than to attempt something beyond the reach of the school.

In most cases it will be better to foster the growing tendency to make the school the community center by holding the exhibit at the school. It may not be convenient, however, to do this in all cases. In many cases it will be difficult to exhibit animals other than poultry at the school, hence the necessity for having a separate show for animals or of holding this phase of the exhibit in connection with the county fair. The exhibit held at the school may later be displayed in part or as a whole at a general fair.

Organization and plans.—It should be borne in mind that if the school exhibit is to represent the real work of the school and related home activities it must be planned ahead. This is especially important in the case of farm products. The student should understand when he is planning his project and buying his seed in the spring that he is to make an exhibit of his products in the fall. The contest idea may well involve the whole project as well as the products exhibited. The exhibition of products may be made a requirement of the complete project and a record of the project may be considered a part of the exhibit.

Early in the fall is the best time for a general exhibit in most parts of the country. This means that arrangements should be made soon after school begins. If there is a live agricultural club, a good part of the responsibility and credit for the work should be turned over to its members. Committees of three members should be appointed for each of the main divisions of the fair, the chairmen of these committees forming an executive board. The teacher may work through these student committees as *ex officio* chairman. As a means of making it a community affair an advisory committee of men in the community should be invited to work with the students. These men should be especially helpful in assisting in the securing of premiums. If a permanent advisory committee aids in the supervising of the home projects, it should serve well in connection with the exhibit. One of the most able students should be appointed by the club as secretary of the school fair.

In order that students may know definitely what will be expected and what are the possibilities in their work it is well to plan the exhibits and contests and secure prizes early in the season. The classification and grouping of exhibits will depend upon the nature and scope of the exhibit. The following grouping of a general fair should be suggestive of what an exhibit may include and how the materials may be grouped:

DIVISION I.—Agricultural products.¹

Class A.—Field crops.

1. Corn—1-ear and 10-ear exhibits.
2. Sorghum—10 heads.
3. Wheat, oats, barley, etc.—1 peck.
4. Field peas, beans, and peanuts—one-half peck.
5. Cotton—20 bolls.
6. Potatoes and sweet potatoes—plate of 10.
7. Pumpkins and squashes—single specimens.
8. Entire plants—
 - (a) Hill of corn—3 stalks with ears.
 - (b) Sorghum—3 stalks with heads.
 - (c) Wheat, oats, barley, etc.—small bundles in the straw.
 - (d) Field peas, beans, and peanuts on the vine.
 - (e) Cotton on the stalk.
 - (f) Entire hill of potatoes.
 - (g) Alfalfa and clover—bundles representing different cuttings.

Class B.—Garden products. (In season.)

1. Radishes, turnips, beets, carrots, etc.—5 bunches.
2. Cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce—6 heads.
3. Peas and beans, brussels sprouts—one-half peck.
4. Eggplant, summer squash, cantaloupes—6 specimens.
5. Tomatoes, cucumbers—plate of 10.
6. Peppers and okra—plants with pods.
7. Watermelons—single specimens.
8. Variety collection from single garden.
9. Vegetables packed for shipment.
10. Flowers.

Class C.—Fruits and nuts.

1. Apples, pears, peaches, quinces—plate of 5.
2. Apricots and plums—plate of 10.
3. Grapes—five clusters.
4. Strawberries and other berries in season—1 quart.
5. Walnuts, pecans, almonds, etc.—one-quarter peck.
6. Fruit packed in commercial packages for shipping.

DIVISION II.—Farm animals.²

Class A.—Poultry.

1. Single fowls—cockerels, pullets, cocks, hens.
2. Pair of fowls—cockerel and pullet, cock and hen.
3. Pens of fowls—1 male and 4 females, any age.
4. Turkeys—1 pair.
5. Ducks—1 pair.
6. Geese—1 pair.
7. Guinea fowls—1 pair.
8. Pigeons—1 pair.
9. Eggs for market—1 dozen, fresh, white or brown, 1 dozen, preserved.
10. Dressed fowls packed for shipment.

¹ All of the agricultural products should be grouped according to type and variety; for example, in the case of corn there should be subclasses for field corn, sweet corn, and pop corn, with place for the important local varieties of each.

² In grouping farm animals, type and variety must be considered. In most cases only pure-bred animals should be admitted.

DIVISION II.—Farm animals—Continued.

Class B.—Pet stock.

1. Rabbits—1 pair.
2. Guinea pigs—1 pair.

Class C.—Swine.

1. Pigs—2 to 4 months old.
2. Breeding stock—sow, boar, or herd of 3 sows and 1 boar.
3. Fat stock.

Class D.—Sheep and goats.

1. Lambs and kids.
2. Breeding stock.

Class E.—Cattle.

1. Calves—heifer under 6 months.
2. Young breeding stock—heifer or bull under 2 years.

Class F.—Ponies and colts.

1. Riding pony.
2. Pony in harness.
3. Colt under 2 years.

DIVISION III.—Miscellaneous farm products.

Class A.—Honey and sirups.

1. Comb honey—five 1-pound frames.
2. Extracted honey—half pint, pint, and quart jars.
3. Maple sirup—quarts and gallons in bottles and cans.
4. Maple sugar—cakes, 1, 3, and 5 pound packages; pails up to 10 pounds.
5. Sorghum and cane sirup—quarts and gallons in bottles and cans.

Class B.—Dairy products.

1. Milk—quart bottled for market.
2. Butter—1 pound.
3. Cheese—1 pound, soft variety.

Class C.—Fruit products.

1. Canned fruit—pints, quarts, gallons, in tin and glass.
2. Cider, grape juice, and vinegar—quart bottle.
3. Dried fruit—1 pound or larger amounts packed for retail trade.

Class D.—Vegetable products.

1. Canned vegetables—quarts and gallons in tin and glass.
2. Garden seeds—1 pound.

DIVISION IV.—School work.¹

Class A.—Work with farm pests.

1. Case of mounted insects showing common orders and families.
2. Mounted insects representing life history of common pests of the district.
3. Mounted specimens of common weeds.
4. Mounted vials of weed seeds.
5. Specimens of common plant diseases.

Class B.—Work with farm crops.

1. Mounted exhibits showing types of varieties of grasses and grains.
2. Vials and jars of farm and garden seeds.
3. Specimens of legumes of different types, showing nodules on root.
4. Seed testers in operation.

¹ Most of this material is used in connection with teaching, and should be a part of the school museum or permanent school exhibit.

DIVISION IV.—School work—Continued.

Class C.—Work with farm animals.

1. Charts used in judging.
2. Babcock test (for demonstration purposes).
3. An exhibit of commercial feeding stuffs.
4. An observation beehive.
5. An incubator in operation.
6. Poultry equipment.
7. Dairy equipment.
8. Models and plans of buildings and equipment.

Class D.—Work with soils and fertilizers.

1. Five-foot tubes of soil showing types of district.
2. An outfit for taking soil samples.
3. Demonstration of soil-acidity test.
4. An erosion model.¹
5. Fertilizing material.
6. Home-mixed fertilizers, with charts showing percentage composition and costs.
7. A demonstration on the use of lime or any exercise from the school laboratory which would apply to local needs and be easily understood.

Class E.—Work in horticulture.

1. Mounted trees to demonstrate pruning.
2. Demonstration of packing fruit and vegetables.
3. Models and plans of home grounds.
4. Charts showing methods and results of spraying.
5. Collections of woods.

Class F.—Work in farm management.

1. Plans and models of farms.
2. General farm records and accounts.
3. Records and accounts of projects.
4. Charts showing labor unit and other information needed in the community.
5. Results of district survey in chart form.

Class G.—Work in rural engineering and farm handicraft work.

1. Products of practice in ironworking.
2. Products of practice in woodworking.
3. Charts showing plans for lighting, heating, water, and sewage systems for farm homes.
4. A gasoline engine.
5. An exhibit of knots and splices.
6. Samples of simple concrete construction.

Preparing the exhibits.—As far as possible all exhibits should be at the school the day before the exhibition. The room or building should be decorated in good taste with farm material. Cornstalks, bunches of grass, and sheaves of grain, with an abundance of bright-colored pumpkins will aid greatly in developing a festive agricultural atmosphere. A whole day may be spent to good advantage in decorating the building, entering the exhibits, and arranging them to

¹ For plans of an erosion model, see Office of Experiment Stations Circular 117, A Working Erosion Model for Schools.

good advantage. Numbers should be given the exhibitors and their names entered by the secretary with their numbers. For each exhibit an entry card should be made out in duplicate, one copy being attached to the exhibit and the other given to the exhibitor. Upon this card should be designated the division, class, exhibit, and a number representing the individual entry. Each student should have his individual exhibit in good shape when brought to the fair. Some time should be devoted to the preparation of exhibits in the various agricultural classes before the fair is held. Some good photographs of the exhibits should be taken before they are disturbed.

A suggested program.—If the exhibits are all in place at the beginning of the day of the fair, the whole day may be spent profitably in getting all that is possible out of it. The following program may be modified to fit local needs and conditions:

- 9 a. m. An agricultural parade.
- 10 a. m. Seeing exhibits. Demonstrations.
- 11 a. m. A short agricultural program.
- 12 m. A basket picnic.
- 1 p. m. Agricultural contests.
- 3 p. m. Athletic contests.
- 7 p. m. An illustrated lecture or moving picture on an agricultural topic.
- 8 p. m. Awarding of prizes.

The parade.—In a village or town a parade will do much to arouse the interest of the people and advertise the fair. Various club and class organizations should be given an incentive to enter a competition for the best float illustrating some phase of agriculture. While all the students should participate in the parade an effort should be made to have them dressed or designated in some way to represent or suggest their agricultural interests. For example, the boys with corn projects may be formed into a military company armed with cornstalks; those interested in poultry projects may form another group with feathers in their hats; and a class in horticulture may be armed with pruning tools. If the school owns a spray outfit or other piece of equipment of service in a community which needs it badly, it should be brought into the parade.

Demonstrations.—In addition to having plain labels and placards showing what the exhibits represent, a group of selected students should be at hand to explain the exhibits. Students may also make demonstrations of work done at school. The following simple demonstrations may suggest others which may be conducted by students: Testing milk, testing soil for acidity, testing eggs, packing fruit, preserving eggs in water glass. More extensive demonstrations conducted by the teacher or some other expert will prove of value if adapted to local needs. Among such demonstrations may be included the canning of fruits and vegetables, such operations as

caponizing fowls, inoculation for hog cholera, vaccination for black-leg, treatment for milk fever, the operation of a gasoline engine, and the killing and dressing of fowls.

The agricultural program.—The forenoon program should be the work of students as far as possible. It should include the singing of harvest-time songs and one or two readings of appropriate poetry. A brief debate on an agricultural topic of local importance would be timely. A clear statement by the teacher or one of the students of the aims and methods of the agricultural instruction of the school or the accomplishments for the year should prove of value as would also brief reports of successful projects by the individual students.

Contests.—The whole exhibit may represent more or less the contest idea in the products of school and home work. The agricultural contests suggested as a feature of the afternoon program represent training toward skill. They may be classed as group or team contests and contests among individuals. Teamwork should be encouraged because of its value in developing the social idea. Individual contests may be conducted with a view to selecting the winners as members of teams to represent a class or the school. It will be necessary to have junior and senior classes in most of the contests if there is any great difference in the age and training of the contestants.

The judging contests may be grouped according to the method used, i. e., those involving the use of the score card and those involving the comparative method. The scoring of farm products and animals is better for the junior classes and for individual contests while the use of the comparative method of placing according to merit is adapted to students who have had practice with score cards.

The following contests may be suggestive of others that will fit local needs and conditions:

1. Judging live stock, horses, cattle, sheep, hogs, poultry, and pet stock.
2. Judging farm products, grains, fruits, potatoes, and other vegetables.
3. Rope tying, 10 to 20 knots and splices.
4. Corn stringing and husking.
5. Fruit packing and box making.
6. Naming of farm and garden seeds.
7. Identification of weeds and weed seeds.
8. Identification of common woods.
9. Riding, driving, and hitching of horses.
10. Killing and dressing of poultry.
11. A plowing match.

Awarding of prizes.—An effort should be made early in the season to secure prizes for the fair, so that the premium list may be published early. If a propaganda is started early and the people see that the school fair represents work which means much in building up the community, it ought not to be difficult to secure premiums. Cash premiums which are out of proportion to the work exhibited

should not be given. It will be better to give recognition to a larger number of students. As a rule it is easier to secure premiums other than cash. For example, in a community interested in poultry it is usually not difficult to get patrons of the school to give pure-bred fowls and settings of eggs as prizes to students for poultry projects and exhibits. Pure-bred pigs make excellent prizes for students in such projects as corn production, as they furnish a start for a new line of work. Books on agriculture and items of equipment are suitable premiums. Whenever there is but little cash it will be advisable to spend it for ribbons and pennants rather than to lump it into one or two prizes. Larger amounts may be spent to good advantage as scholarships on payments on any college course in agriculture. Attendance at short courses given at the college and visit to fairs and other places of agricultural interest have high educational value if properly planned and supervised, hence are valuable premiums for the projects and exhibits which represent considerable endeavor. Printed certificates may be used also as rewards, and should be given in connection with other premiums.

Rules for contests and standards for judging exhibits will depend upon local conditions. Such rules and standards should be made known to the contestants as early as possible. In most cases it will be best to have competent persons from outside the community to do the judging. The judging should be done as early in the day as possible and the place won by the exhibit placed on the entry card for the benefit of those visiting the fair. The awarding of the prizes is suggested as the last number on the program as a means of keeping up interest to the last.